

Commissioner Deborah A. Gist's Weekly Field Memo
Friday, January 6, 2012

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE looks ahead at [2012 initiatives](#)
2. RIDE to hold statewide conference on virtual learning, [technology and, education innovation](#)
3. Education Department to release [Race to the Top](#) progress reports
4. Barrington, Bristol Warren, Lincoln schools win [USDA awards](#)

From the R.I. Department of Education (RIDE):

5. RIDE schedules webinar on assessments and [English-language learners](#)
6. *Reminder:* Superintendents asked to select three contacts to work on [Instructional Management System](#) – **Action Item**
7. RIDE, Arts Learning Network request proposals regarding evaluation of [arts educators](#)
8. [Personal Literacy Plan](#) data must be submitted by February 1 – **Action Item**
9. Online course, resource guide on safe schools for [sexual-minority youth](#) to be available
10. RIDE moving forward with [course coding](#) for middle schools, high schools, career-technical courses
11. [Roster Verification](#) trainings scheduled for principals, teachers

Other:

12. 2012 Safety is No Accident Video/[Poster Contest](#) open to all Rhode Island high-school students

Action Item Calendar

Today (January 6): Costs report on [special education](#) due
January 13: Deadline for selection of Instructional Management System contacts (see below)
February 1: [Green Ribbon Schools](#) nomination deadline
February 1: Personal Literacy Plan data-submission deadline (see below)
February 11: Statewide conference on [virtual learning](#)
June 30: Schools and districts submit [final personnel assignments](#)

Notes from Commissioner Gist:

1. RIDE looks ahead at 2012 initiatives

I hope you enjoyed a wonderful holiday season and that, like me, you are looking forward to a terrific year in 2012. We have many important statewide initiatives under way, and I am eager to continue working together to transform education in our state.

We capped off a year of extraordinary accomplishments last month with the announcement that Rhode Island has won a Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge grant, so high on our agenda for 2012 will be organizing our team and to move forward with putting this \$50-million grant into action. We also will be continuing to work hard on the key components of our initial Race to the Top grant, notably the educator-evaluation system, which every district in the state is implementing, and the statewide training for teachers and school leaders on the Common Core State Standards. As a PARCC governing state, we are actively engaged in our commitment to design new world-class assessments, and we are also working with Achieve, Inc., as a lead state in developing the Next Generation Science Standards.

In preparing our request for flexibility under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, we are taking the opportunity to review our entire accountability and intervention procedures so as to build a more nuanced system that recognizes the unique needs of each school and district and that would allow us to provide the targeted support that our teachers and students need in order to accelerate schools toward greatness. We continue to seek input on our flexibility request, and we will hold a public forum on the request on Monday (January 9), at 6 p.m., at the Providence Career and Technical Center, 41 Fricker St.

Finally, as the General Assembly begins its session, we will continue advocate to ensure that all communities have the resources they need to provide students with a world-class education.

As you can see, we are moving forward on all fronts in our work toward making Rhode Island schools America's best! I am truly grateful for the work you do in your community every day and for your commitment to improving the lives of Rhode Island students and improving the future of our state.

2. RIDE to hold statewide conference on virtual learning, technology, and education innovation

As I noted to you in a field memo last month (December 2), we are planning to make a major commitment this year to exploring opportunities for innovation through virtual learning and other uses of technology. Thanks to support we have received from a charitable foundation, we plan to open up a competitive-bid process for proposals from LEAs interested in revising and creating policy at the local level to support digital learning and innovative practices. The LEAs that apply would propose a school site at which they will create a "technology-rich learning environment...that fundamentally rethinks and restructures school, the school day, and teaching

and learning” through such initiatives as digital curriculum, gaming, 1:1 computing, virtual-learning environments, expanded learning opportunities, and flexible scheduling. This school would be a pilot program that will help us launch a statewide initiative.

To prepare schools and districts to submit the best possible proposals and to open up a statewide conversation on how technology can power innovation in our schools, we will hold a conference on Saturday, **February 11**, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m., at Rhode Island College, featuring a number of expert speakers from across the country as well as numerous breakout sessions.

In next week’s field memo, I will share with you information on registration for the conference and on the request for proposals on virtual learning. I hope that you will select a team from your district to attend this conference, and we also will issue an invitation to teachers, school leaders, and other educators from across the state as well as to students, parents, community members, school-committee leaders, elected officials, and the media.

Meanwhile, please hold the date of February 11, and I will share more information as we develop our conference agenda and our request for proposals.

3. Education Department to release Race to the Top progress reports

On Tuesday, the U.S. Department of Education will release reports for each of the 12 Race to the Top states on progress made and lessons learned during Year One of the grant. The report will focus on four core education-reform areas:

- adopting rigorous standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace;
- recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals;
- building data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices; and
- turning around the lowest-performing schools.

We anticipate that the report will have many positive things to say about the progress we are making in Rhode Island, as we work hard together to put these Race to the Top funds into action. The Education Department is expected to post the reports for each state on its website on Tuesday morning.

4. Barrington, Bristol Warren, Lincoln schools win USDA awards

Last month, I shared with you news that several East Providence schools earned U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) HealthierUS School Challenge Bronze Awards. This month, we have received word that schools in Barrington, Bristol Warren, and Lincoln have also received bronze awards:

Barrington
Sowams School

Bristol Warren

Colt Andrews Elementary School
Guiteras Elementary School
Hugh Cole Elementary School
Rockwell Elementary School

Lincoln

Lincoln Central Elementary School
Lonsdale Elementary School
Northern Lincoln Elementary School
Saylesville Elementary School

The award recognizes schools that have demonstrated a commitment to excellence in both nutrition and physical education to promote a healthier environment for children. Thanks to all who have worked so hard to achieve this national recognition. Well done!

If you'd like to find out more about the HealthierUS School Challenge and how your schools might achieve recognition, please contact Sandra Fabrizio in our Child Nutrition Program, at 222-4682 or Sandra.fabrizio@ride.ri.gov.

Here is a link to the USDA website with additional information regarding the Challenge:

<http://teamnutrition.usda.gov/HealthierUS/index.html>

From RIDE:

5. RIDE schedules webinar on assessments and English-language learners

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

On **Wednesday** (January 11), from 9:30 - 10:30 a.m., we will continue our Comprehensive Assessment System webinar series with a presentation on the cultural and linguistic demands of assessment. The webinar will explain the factors that impact validity of assessment data for English-language learners (ELLs), will share resources for developing or selecting and scoring assessments for ELLs, and will answer questions regarding the assessment of ELLs. To register, please visit:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/assessment/CAS.aspx>

6. *Reminder: Superintendents asked to select three contacts to work on Instructional Management System – Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

RIDE has begun the building of the Instructional Management System. This online system will provide a systematic, coherent, and ongoing combination of curriculum (including standards), instruction, and assessment to support student achievement.

The system will:

- align curriculum, instruction, and assessments to support student achievement;
- manage and access curricular, instructional, professional-development, and student-support materials;
- access relevant and timely visual reporting of assessment and other data (“dashboards”) for immediate student, class, school, and district needs;
- query data to determine areas of student strengths and needs while being able to track student progress so that learning gaps do not form or widen;
- provide access to professional-development modules around formative-assessment strategies;
- include an RTI-management module that allows teachers and administrators to fully manage and administrate implementation plans and track student progress toward goals; and
- design, distribute, and score assessments (will not include the PARCC or RIAA assessments).

There is much to do for districts to prepare for implementing the IMS. Its development has just begun, but we know how important it is to identify the key people who will be the points of contact in your LEA. To plan for the upcoming meeting, please identify *three* people from your LEA. The IMS is a complex system with extensive data requirements and requires a deep understanding of curriculum and Response to Intervention (RTI).

District Contact Information: Please send the following information to Jasmine Rezendes, in our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum, at jasmine.rezendes@ride.ri.gov:

district name;
name;
e-mail;
phone number; and
position of each of the three people.

Person One will: understand and be involved in technology capacities and data management district-wide.

Person Two will: understand and be involved in district-wide curriculum development

Person Three will: understand and be involved in RTI initiatives district-wide

The first meeting will be on Friday, **January 13**. The meeting will take place at the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative, 640 George Washington Highway, Suite 200, Lincoln, and it will be broken into two half-day sessions. Please have your district representatives plan on attending either the morning or afternoon session. Participants can register through eRide, at:

<http://www.eride.ri.gov/WorkshopReg/viewWorkshop.aspx?workshopid=395>

For more information about the IMS, please contact Bob Measel (Robert.Measel@ride.ri.gov) or Heather Heineke (Heather.Heineke@ride.ri.gov).

7. RIDE, Arts Learning Network request proposals regarding evaluation of arts educators

Please see this notice from our Office of Multiple Pathways:

The Arts Learning Network and RIDE are pleased to announce a request for proposals for supporting arts educators and their evaluators implementing the new educator-evaluation process. Participation includes the development of common rubrics, process for determining baseline student data, and evidence of student growth and/or mastery. The application deadline is Friday, February 10. Please review the application on the RIDE website:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/gle.aspx#arts> .

If you have any questions, please contact Rosemary Burns, at rosemary.burns@ride.ri.gov or 222-8483.

8. Personal Literacy Plan data must be submitted by February 1 – *Action Item*

Please see this notice from our Office of Instruction, Assessment, and Curriculum:

In the fall, LEAs submitted their initial lists of students with Personal Literacy Plans (PLPs). The second step of the PLP data submission for the current school year must be completed and submitted by **February 1**. Superintendent sign-off is required with the submission of this data. To ensure the accuracy and timeliness of the reporting, please remind key staff members (data managers, PLP coordinators, et al.) about the upcoming deadline and review the instructions (coding) before starting this step:

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/documents/Directions_for_Completing_the_PLP_Upload-9_2011.pdf

It is important to note that this collection needs to include all reading supports that have been given to *every* student from September to February, regardless of movement out of district or completion the program. Using the data files that were submitted last fall, follow the procedures outlined in [Personal Literacy Plan \(PLP\) Data Collection 2011-2012](#):

http://www.ride.ri.gov/Instruction/DOCS/documents/Personal_Literacy_Plan_PLP_Data_Collection_2011-2012.pdf

If you need assistance or require additional information about the PLP reporting requirements, please do not hesitate to contact RIDE key personnel:

For program-related questions, please contact Diane Girard, at diane.girard@ride.ri.gov or 222-8479.

For technical questions, please contact the eRIDE HelpDesk at helpdesk@ride.ri.gov or 222-8400.

9. Online course, resource guide on safe schools for sexual-minority youth to be available

Please see this notice from our Office of Student, Community and Academic Support:

Next month, the RIDE Coordinated School Health (CSH) program, thrive, will offer a new online professional-development course for teachers. The course is on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, or Questioning (LGBTQ) issues and how to effectively and supportively respond to LGBTQ students.

For information about the course and to register, please go to the CSH website, [thrive](#).

The CSH program will also provide all superintendents with a resource guide, *A Silent Crisis – Creating Safe Schools for Sexual Minority Youth*.

This resource, for teachers, counselors, administrators, and others who want to learn more about creating conditions for learning that are physically and emotionally safe for all students, including those who are or are perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning, provides many practical tools and strategies for providing safe, respectful, and supportive learning environments.

10. RIDE moving forward with course coding for middle schools, high schools, career-technical courses

Please see this message for our Office of Data, Analysis, and Research:

Thank you for working with our course coder Mary Neuman to standardize your high-school course codes. Thanks to cooperation from your principals, guidance counselors, curriculum directors and data managers, your high-school mathematics, science, English language arts, and social studies courses are now all mapped to the National Center for Education Statistics' School Codes for the Exchange of Data (SCED). The high-school reports have already been forwarded electronically to each high-school principal. In the coming week, your high-school principals will receive a hard copy of courses mapped to the national standards in addition to an individualized report for each high school.

RIDE has hired a K-8 course coder, Jason Cotoia, who has worked in a charter and traditional middle schools; Jason has begun to develop the coding tool for the middle level. We will be sending an electronic memo to middle-school principals requesting links and /or hard copies of programs of studies and curriculum outlines for middle-school courses.

RIDE has also secured a Career and Technical Education (CTE) course coder. This individual will begin working on this project next week. RIDE already has the majority of

the information necessary to begin coding your CTE courses to the national standards. We will reach out individually if we find that our information is incomplete.

Again, thank you for your continued cooperation on this project.

11. Roster Verification trainings scheduled for principals, teachers

Please see this notice from our Division of Educator Excellence and Instructional Effectiveness:

Roster Verification (RV) is the process through which teachers and principals verify which students are in which teachers' classes. This process is critical in ensuring the accuracy of teacher-course-student (TCS) data, which will be used in the new IMS, EPSS, and GMV data systems being developed under Race to the Top, as well as for educator evaluations. We appreciate your help in ensuring that your principals and teachers participate in the appropriate trainings and are prepared for the RV.

In preparation for the RV process next month, RIDE is developing trainings for teachers and principals with RV responsibilities. These trainings apply to:

- all teachers who are contributing educators for ELA or mathematics in grades 3 - 7;
- "teachers of record" for ELA or mathematics in grades 3 – 7; and
- principals with grades 3 - 7 in their schools.

Teachers will be able to access a pre-recorded instructional video through that RIDE website that will guide them in their RV responsibilities and will demonstrate how to use the RV Tool. This video and associated guidance will be posted on the RIDE website on January 23.

Principals will have the option of participating in one of three live webinars that will train them on their RV responsibilities and on how to use the RV tool. The content of these webinars will be identical, and the webinars will be recorded for principals who are unable to attend on the scheduled dates. Principals will receive a direct communication from RIDE regarding these trainings early next week. The dates and registration links for the principal webinars are:

- January 25, 3 - 5 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/719810494>
- January 27, 12 - 2 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/789037502>
- January 31, 3 - 5 p.m.: <https://www3.gotomeeting.com/register/852318838>

Additionally, RIDE will offer "virtual office hours" for principals and eRIDE helpdesk supports for all educators accessing the system. More information about these will be forthcoming.

If you have any questions, please contact Jan Mermin, at jan.mermin@ride.ri.gov.

Other:

12. 2012 Safety is No Accident Video/Poster Contest open to all Rhode Island high-school students

Please see this notice about a contest open to all high-school students:

The Injury Prevention Center at Rhode Island Hospital, the Rhode Island Public Health Association, AAA of Southern New England, the Rhode Island Committee on Occupational Safety and Health, and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration announce the 2012 Safety is No Accident video/poster contest, and they invite all Rhode Island high-school students to participate. By participating in the contest, students will learn how to recognize, avoid, and communicate about safety hazards where they live, where they work, and when they are on the road. For more information about the contest, see:

www.ipc.rhodeislandhospital.org

Or for further information, you may e-mail the contest organizers, at SafetyisNoAccident2012@gmail.com.

RIDE will post this field memo on Tuesday, at:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Commissioner/fieldmemos/default.aspx>